

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND
(Adopted May 23, 2005)

**PUBLIC HEARING, PRESENTATION, SPECIAL SESSION AND WORKSESSION
OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Monday, May 2, 2005

OFFICIALS PRESENT

Mayor Porter
Councilmember Austin-Lane
Councilmember Barry
Councilmember Elrich
Councilmember Mizeur
Councilmember Seamens
Councilmember Williams

City Manager Matthews
Deputy City Manager Hobbs
Acting City Clerk Carpenter
Public Works Director Lott
Deputy Public Works Director Braithwaite
HCD Director Daines
Senior Planner Inerfeld

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Ms. Porter announced that Council just completed an Executive Function Session to work on the City Attorney's evaluation. We will hold another session in two weeks.

Mr. Seamens announced that he will not be able to attend next Monday's council meeting. Mr. Seamens also announced that the Community Action Board is sponsoring a conference on childcare issues on May 25, 6:30 p.m., at the Longbranch Community Center.

Mr. Williams commended Historic Takoma on the recent House and Garden Tour. In addition, Mr. Williams announced a training for Hospice volunteers, to be held in Silver Spring, June 5, 6, and 7.

Mr. Elrich thanked the Recreation Department for the Rock the Block party in his ward. It was well attended. I wish they were annual events.

Ms. Austin-Lane announced the Film Festival kick-off meeting to be held tomorrow meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Ms. Austin-Lane requested that the Mayor add the Maple Avenue speed hump issue to the evening's agenda.

Mayor Porter agreed to add it as a worksession item following the Safe Roadways Committee.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Seth Grimes, 7300 Willow Avenue, asked for a response to his inquiry about expenditures for the City Attorney.

Ms. Porter responded that City Manager will be prepared to discuss that next week.

Sabrina Baron, President of Historic Takoma, thanked Mr. Williams for his comments on the House and Garden Tour. She noted this is the 31st year of the tour. They sold about 550 tickets.

Ms. Baron commented on the proposed gateway signs. We've had some concerns about the mass, scale and attractiveness of the signs. We think there should be a goal of compatibility here. We are prepared to support the SHA waivers needed. We were disappointed to see the statement from the consultant. We thought the working group had reached some compromise and consensus. Since there is not a budget to fabricate the tertiary and directional signs, these signs need to highlight the business districts. They have not yet been approved by the HPC. We appreciate the opportunity to work, would like to continue the work. We have plenty of time to work toward a compromise. Ms. Baron provided a foil impression of the original City Seal.

David Lanar, Scout Master, spoke about the planned Soap Box Derby, to be held on Sunday, May 8. He apologized for not understanding the role of the City in approving the closure of the streets. He described the proposed races and the plans to keep the boys safe.

1. Update on the Community Center Construction Project.

City Manager Matthews reported that the Library will be closed Friday, May 6, because of work to be done to the sidewalk. One of the unknowns in the project has to do with the permanent power connection to the building. After PEPCO completes their work, the contractor will take 30 days to finish. Her best guess is mid to late June for completion. Some finish work remains for inside the building,. Because of the possibility of damage from humidity in the building, the contractor is holding off on carpeting and some mill work until the power is installed.

The RFP notice appeared in yesterday's Washington Post. Responses will be accepted until June 3. The process includes a walk through for bidders, and a qualification process by the architectural firm.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked what outreach is being done to assure that this is competitively bid?

Ms. Matthews responded that a number of firms have been previously identified. Mr. Kohn had offered to make those contacts to avoid a conflict of interest.

Mr. Barry commented that it still looks like there are a lot of incomplete pieces. Do we receive the \$1000 a day while we are waiting for PEPCO?

Ms. Matthews responded yes. We were waiting for pricing and submissions on the PCO's. We would like the opportunity to review them and have further discussion in mid may. We hope to have some resolution on the PCO's by mid may.

Mr. Barry noted that the sum total of PCO's dwarf the amount of liquidated damages.

Mr. Seamens asked for clarification on what will be completed when Knott is finished.

Ms. Matthews responded that areas which will be complete include the construction of the front addition, the Community Learning Center, and the renovation of the existing upper level, as well as the new lower level. Certain meeting rooms will be completed. The pottery, dance, and teen room, will be part of the community level process. I expect an award for the community plaza level around the first of July, with completion around the latter part of this year.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked what process will the Council go through to identify options for use of the \$350,000 in additional funding from the State. There is some confusion as to where that \$350,000 fits with the \$2.6 million bond.

Ms. Matthews said a number of bid alternates, such as the security system, the skylight, and the addition of an elevator in the front of the building will be reviewed. That would be part of the Council's discussion.

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Public Hearing - Proposed BY06 Budget

Ms. Porter announced that there will be an additional public hearing next week.

Stacy Baker, 6715 Poplar Avenue, Circle Woods Community Association, approved of the \$25,000 in the proposed budget for restoration of the Spring Park fountain. It's a priority to solve the water problem. Water runs continually throughout the year, making a large area of the park unusable. Water goes onto the sidewalk. Funding to solve the water runoff problem is important. Secondly, we would like to spend less than \$25,000, if at all possible. Plant thirsty plants that might reduce the engineering burden. Ask Public Works, the City Gardener, the Arborist, and plant experts for advice.

Seth Grimes, Willow Avenue, noted the Legal Services budget is approximately \$18,000 less than FY05 proposed. COLTA spending appears flat.

Ms. Matthews said that COLTA administration is included in the legal services budget. Recodification expenses have been higher because of the number of meetings attended by the City Attorney. We are still working on some codification. Silber and Perlman will provide review, rather than actual drafting.

Sabrina Baron, President of Historic Takoma, supported the work in Spring Park. Historic Takoma would be interested in working with any of these restoration projects, such as the fountain and the statue. She asked that Council support the city gardener's budget. The public spaces really lends to the beauty of Takoma Park. The parks and gardens are in better shape than in decades.

The Public Hearing closed at 8:22 p.m.

SPECIAL SESSION

3. Resolution re: Historic Preservation Month

Ms. Daines commented that May is National Historic Preservation Month. This resolution is a way to support Historic Takoma and local groups working on Historic Preservation.

Motion by Williams; second by Mizeur

Ms. Porter commented that this is a really good time to adopt this resolution. Historic Takoma contributes so much to the community.

Sabrina Baron, thanked the Council for adopting the resolution. This community has a fabulous history. We have the largest historic district in Montgomery County. This is a fabulous and unique community.

Resolution 2005-34 was adopted (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams).

Resolution 2005-34 (Attached)

4. 1st Reading Ordinance re: Home Buyer's Club

Ms. Daines described the Home Buyer's Club program. It is a 12-month program designed to increase readiness and awareness for potential home buyers. We were 99% certain this would be funded by a grant at the County level. We have \$25,000 earmarked for a revolving loan fund for home purchases. We are asking that you allow us to reprogram that in FY05. As of today, 19 people were registered. There is a waiting list for people outside the community. Registrations are being taken by the Recreation Department.

Mr. Elrich asked if there is a different fee for nonresidents?

Ms. Daines responded that there is no fee. We are looking at having the participants pay for their second credit check. Initially there is a comprehensive credit check. Then, midway through, a second credit check is recommended.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked why would we open this up to residents outside the city.

Ms. Daines responded that with any of the Recreation courses, there are two fee levels. Because this is to benefit residents, we have not registered those outside the city yet. The biggest cost savings will be primarily in the credit checks that are run. There is a fixed price for the program, except for the credit checks.

Ms. Mizeur suggested charging a fee to the non-residents.

Ms. Daines said there will be a \$75 per participant fee for the credit check.

Ms. Porter asked can we charge non residents for both credit reports.

Ms. Daines said that is different from what we advertised, but we can do it.

Ms. Mizeur said she would like a fee to recover some of the cost of the class.

Mr. Elrich said the fixed price for the class will not change whether there are 20 or 30 residents.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that charging a program fee for nonresidents would start to cover some of the fixed costs.

Porter noted that based on the target population, they probably wouldn't participate.

Austin-Lane said that to buy a house, you have to have more than \$500. The fee should cover more than the credit report.

Mr. Williams suggested nonresidents pay for both credit reports, and \$50 fee for supplies and miscellaneous (\$200).

Seamens supported some fee to recover fixed costs. He suggested \$350, to discourage applications from outside of Takoma Park.

Mr. Elrich supported the lower number. There are times when people from Takoma Park take advantage of County programs. These people are at the very low end of things. It won't cost us more to let them into the class.

Ms. Porter said she would like to give residents preference to the final day. People outside the city should pay the marginal cost.

Ms. Mizeur asked if there is any argument to be made that the larger the group, the less one-on-one attention?

Ms. Daines said there is always an argument for that. On the other hand, the more people

engaged in the class, the more points of view there are to share.

The Council directed that the next time the class is contemplated, there should be a discussion about the issue of non resident fees.

Motion by Elrich; second by Williams, to adopt the ordinance, with the staff to come back with a recommendation on fees at second reading.

Ordinance 2005-12 was accepted at first reading (VOTING FOR: Porter, Austin-Lane, Barry, Elrich, Mizeur, Seamens, Williams).

**Ordinance 2005-12
(Attached)**

WORKSESSION

5. Proposed FY06 Budget

Ms. Porter noted that this is an opportunity for requests for additional information. During the budget process, the City Manager is going to identify areas of particular interest, policy issues, and changes. Council can bring up ideas and requests. We will focus on the most important things. Upcoming discussions include Thursday, May 12. Keep open Thursday, May 26, in case that evening is needed for additional discussion. Note that scheduled adjournment times go later than 10 p.m.

Ms. Austin-Lane asked if the gardening budget is enough to sustain the activities? She said she would appreciate a breakdown of how expenditures are made, either monthly or quarterly. She requested that there be further analysis of the Police Communications budget.

Ms. Elrich said a discussion about police dispatch should take place during this budget cycle. We asked for this discussion last year and there has been no movement on it.

Ms. Matthews said she as requested a meeting with the County Executive's Office to talk about this.

Mr. Seamens said he would be interested in talking about ways to buffer low income residents from the tax increase.

Council discussed this briefly and requested staff to explore the

Mr. Williams asked if the budget included an increase in the property tax credit to 50 percent of the State credit.

Ms. Matthews said the proposed budget does not include it. She will get more information on

the impact of this.

Ms. Austin-Lane requested an update on the Tool Library.

Additional Agenda Item - Discussion of Maple Avenue Speed Humps

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that the issue came up April 14, when Daryl Braithwaite came to brief neighbors on Maple Avenue about repaving. A standard speed hump has been recently adopted. Staff was aware that residents wanted the same speed humps put back. I believe that we have now flyer'd or mailed the schedule for repaving and the design plan for Maple Avenue. People want confirmation that what we discussed is what they will be getting. I request that we direct the City Manager to use the previous speed hump height on Maple Avenue.

Mr. Lott described the speed hump standard, a 3.5 inch hump with a less severe slope on a 12 foot base, designed to slow traffic but minimize damage to automobiles. The humps were installed on Hickory and Garland. They are effective. We can install 4 inch speed humps on Maple, using the same methods of adding a slope to the arch.

Ms. Austin-Lane said I haven't heard complaints from people on Maple about car damage. I've heard loud and clear that they would get the same bumps that they had before the reconstruction. The Council's setting a standard was not to impact the speed humps on Maple. I would like us to go forward with the agreement.

Ms. Porter noted a letter from Jim Douglas and Frank Lundig, dated May 24, 2004. She agreed with Ms. Austin-Lane. When we passed a new standard, we did it because we thought it would be a better speed hump. Nevertheless, there were long discussions with this neighborhood and an agreement was reached. The question is whether we will honor the process that people engaged in. We need to be sensitive to the outcome of the processes, even if it is not the optimal engineering. Following the decision on this street, all speed humps should follow the standard.

Ms. Austin-Lane said it is possible that one size does not fit all. For us to say this one speed hump will be the only one in the city is probably not sensitive to the diversity of our roads. If we have another community process, we would again consider that.

Mr. Elrich said I don't have a problem with the four inches. People on the buses will tell you what an unpleasant ride it is.

Ms. Mizeur said I appreciate your attempt to stress consistency. I would not in general be supportive of opening the process for all of the streets. I am sensitive to the need to acknowledge the process we engaged in with this community on Maple Avenue. This does make a case for a special exception.

Mr. Williams questioned whether we can put back the same speed humps.

Mr. Lott responded that we can.

Mr. Williams commented that the general policy ought to be to keep the speed of traffic down, not to divert traffic off the road. When we have that discussion, we should be prepared to stick with the profile we've established. It should hold traffic at or below the posted speed, not be designed to make people stop.

Ms. Porter said the standard speed hump is designed to keep people at an even speed. I agree, for the future, we ought to go with the standard speed hump.

Mr. Elrich suggested that people should be directed to drive over the new speed humps before deciding they don't want them.

Mr. Seamens said this may give us an opportunity to time traffic, to see if it slows them. We could compare it to the standard.

Ms. Austin-Lane thanked everyone for taking up the issue tonight. I want to make sure it is clear that we do honor the process we engaged in. What happens in front of your house is a sensitive issue. We need to have an approach that is respectful of the people whose streets we're designing, and be conscious of the traffic calming needs. I would like to see us have a sophisticated means of dialogue with the public about these issues.

There was Council consensus to go with the old speed humps.

Ms. Braithwaite said we have three more days of work on Maple. It's not our recollection that the old speed humps on Maple were six feet wide. We would be putting back a 12 wide speed hump. The engineer is not aware of any six foot wide speed humps.

Kent Hanson, Maple Avenue, commented that when we went through the process, the profile was measured.

BREAK

The Council recessed for a scheduled break at 9:21 p.m. and reconvened at 9:30 p.m.

6. Safe Roadways Committee Priority Areas for the FY06 Budget

Greg Castano, Mike Goodno, Sanjay Grover, Katherine Kelly, and Susan Solarz of the Safe Roadways Committee were present for the discussion. The Committee presented a slide presentation (attached).

Mr. Castano said the Committee convened in September. We reviewed reports produced over several years and looked for a way to prioritize the information. There are five major recommendations: 1) multimodal route enhancement; public outreach events or programs;

improve transit accessibility; enhance bike facilities; and creation of a sidewalk. Takoma Park is in a unique position. It is a good time to be thinking systematically, long term, about what our city streets will look like. Our themes are accessibility and connectivity.

Mr. Elrich asked if the committee recommends sidewalks on both sides of a street. Ms. Kelly responded yes, where feasible.

Mr. Grover commented that we don't a good audit of our streets, sidewalks, crosswalks. What roles our neighborhood roads are playing.

Mr. Elrich asked did you look at changing street patterns to one way, narrowing streets, widening sidewalks, creating parking on both sides?

Mr. Castano responded that the committee reviewed a lot of preexisting reports. We really were trying to figure out where the city wanted to go based on past studies.

Ms. Austin-Lane commented that she hopes we will benefit from pedestrian safety studies in Montgomery County and other local governments. Dan Burden was one step. I would like to see a year round schedule, workshops, workgroups, to move us closer to these goals. The database seems like an important piece. I'd like to know if there is a budget implication. This is something that our city needs to take on in a little bigger way. These are sensitive issues. Dan Burden talked about putting roads on a diet, seeing how you can narrow the roadway, vertical elements to slow drivers.

Mr. Williams commented that we have a pretty good database of streets, sidewalks, curbs and gutters.

Mr. Grover suggested that we need information on volume and speed, and learning what role our neighborhood streets are playing.

Mike Goodno noted that the County has data on sidewalks. It can be done by driving or with aerial photography.

Ms. Porter commented that at one point we did know what volumes were on the streets. We knew where streets stood on a five-point scale.

Mr. Williams commented on the experience with Pinecrest. We received a loan and grant from the county, which included a comprehensive look at how to build a sidewalk network when none were there before. We have some experience with the difficulty of dealing with this. We need to figure out how to come up with a policy and a process to look at the overall plan. Mr. Williams noted the need to add Carroll Avenue to the report.

Ms. Porter indicated that there is a need to make the sidewalks accessible to people. We need to think of a way to make them attractive. The money involved is the other factor. We have not

succeeded in obtaining money for sidewalks. If you can help us identify funding for this, it would help. COG is coordinating a street smart media blitz in June. I encouraged them to include enforcement action. We need to work with other municipalities, who are very aware of these issues because these are the areas where people walk.

Mr. Seamens noted that the idea of the database raises the question of what this would cost us, and who would do it.

Mr. Grover mentioned the Montgomery County GIS database. He mentioned the problem of signage covered by trees. This should be a priority for the City.

Seamens said it would be helpful to have a more clear identification of areas of responsibility, City, County and State. He said he is surprised to see beautification and tree lined streets as a recommendation. I would like feedback on crosswalks and recommendations, and on traffic lights. If there is anything you can do to prepare the City to better address the needs for traffic lights, that would be helpful. Do you see yourself as advocates?

Mr. Barry commented on the whole relationship with SHA, where sometimes things work well, sometimes they do not. Some things get partway done, but not finished. Projects are planned, but there is no money to do the work. Where are the key decision points? A more complete understanding of how SHA operates would be helpful. The frustrations are manifest, across the board.

Ms. Mizeur noted the need to address Park and Planning, too. Sligo Creek Parkway, for example, has a school bus stop, no speed humps. We've requested additional safe crossings on that roadway.

7. Gateway Signs and Outstanding Design Issues (Including City Logo)

Sabrina Baron, Erwin Mack, John Urciolo were present for the discussion.

Rob Inerfeld commented that on March 7, Council authorized AGI to fabricate the signs. Before they can design and fabricate the signs, we need to decide color, locations, logo, and the tag lines. We need to select the design of directional signs, and the design of the tertiary gateway signs.

After discussion, Council selected the following four areas for the siting of the Gateway Signs: University Blvd. and Carroll Ave.; East-West Highway east of New Hampshire; Laurel Avenue and Eastern; Piney Branch and Eastern. Three other sites remain on the list for review as alternatives or for future siting: Eastern Ave. and New Hampshire; Flower and Piney Branch; and Fenton and New York.

Locations of historic district tertiary gateway signs: Council agreed to put the tertiary gateway historic signs as per the recommendation from staff.

Color of the signs: the majority supported the darker green color as described by staff.

Directional sign issue: Council consensus to not pursue the vertical sign. Pursue adaptation of the horizontal signs by making them narrower, with two lines of text per location.

Tertiary gateway signs: Council expressed interest in seeing a rectangular sign as an alternative. Staff was directed to prepare an inexpensive mock up.

Logo: Council directed that staff come back to Council with version #4, in the green color, blue lines on the hills (with the date lettering from version #3). Obtain public comments on this design.

Tag line on the signs: Staff was directed to provide variety of options. There was some sentiment to exclude A Nuclear Free Zone and Tree City from the list.

8. CDBG Program

There was consensus to enter into an agreement with the County.

ADJOURNMENT

The Council adjourned for the evening at 11:33 p.m.